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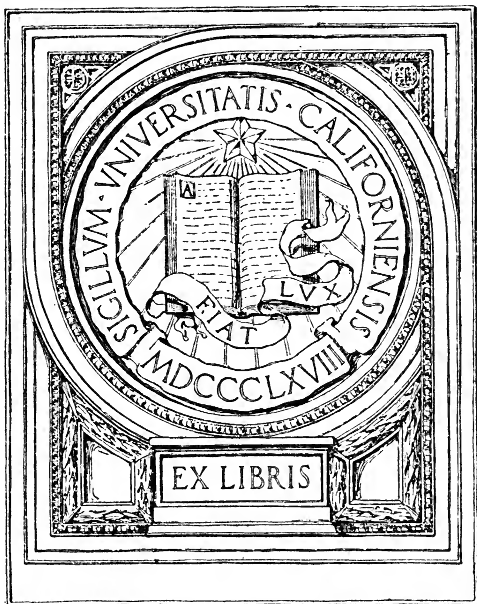
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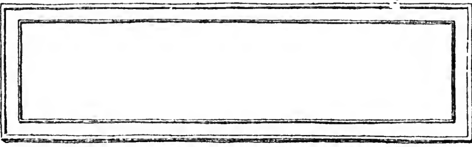

THE NEW ARMY IN TRAINING

BY

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I

THE MEN AT WORK

The ore, the furnace and the hammer are all that is needed for a sword.—*Native proverb.*

THIS was a cantonment one had never seen before, and the grey-haired military policeman could give no help.

'My experience,' he spoke detachedly, 'is that you'll find everything everywhere. Is it any particular corps you're looking for?'

'Not in the least,' I said.

'Then you're all right. You can't miss getting something.' He pointed generally to the North Camp. 'It's like floods in a town, isn't it?'

He had hit the just word. All known marks in the place were submerged by troops. Parade-grounds to their utmost limits were crowded with them; rises and sky-lines were furred with them, and the length of the roads heaved and rippled like bicycle-chains with blocks of men on the move.

The voice of a sergeant in the torment reserved

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for sergeants at roll-call boomed across a bunker. He was calling over recruits to a specialist corps.

'But I've called you once!' he snapped at a man in leggings.

'But I'm Clarke Two,' was the virtuous reply.

'Oh, you are, are you?' He pencilled the correction with a scornful mouth, out of one corner of which he added, '"Sloppy" Clarke! You're all Clarkes or Watsons to-day. You don't know your own names. You don't know what corps you're in. (This was bitterly unjust, for they were squinting up at a biplane.) You don't know anything.'

'Mm!' said the military policeman. 'The more a man has in his head, the harder it is for him to manage his carcass—at first. I'm glad I never was a sergeant. Listen to the instructors! Like rooks, ain't it?'

There was a mile of sergeants and instructors, varied by company officers, all at work on the ready material under their hands. They grunted, barked, yapped, expostulated, and, in rare cases, purred, as the lines broke and formed and wheeled over the vast maidan. When companies numbered off one could hear the tone and accent of every walk in life, and maybe half the counties of England, from the deep-throated 'Woon' of the north to the sharp, half-whistled Devonshire 'Tu.' And as the instructors laboured, so did the men,

with a passion to learn as passionately as they were taught.

Presently, in the drift of the foot-traffic down the road, there came another grey-haired man, one foot in a bright slipper, which showed he was an old soldier cherishing a sore toe. He drew alongside and considered these zealous myriads.

'Good?' said I, deferentially.

'Yes,' he said. 'Very good'—then, half to himself: 'Quite different, though.' A pivot-man near us had shifted a little, instead of marking time, on the wheel. His face clouded, his lips moved. Obviously he was cursing his own clumsiness.

'That's what I meant,' said the veteran. 'Innocent! Innocent! Mark you, they ain't doin' it to be done with it and get off. They're doin' it because—because they want to do it.'

'Wake up! Wake *up* there, Isherwood!' This was a young subaltern's reminder flung at a back which straightened itself. That one human name coming up out of all that maze of impersonal manœuvring stuck in the memory like wreckage on the ocean.

'An' it wasn't 'ardly even necessary to caution Mister Isherwood,' my companion commented. 'Prob'ly he's bitterly ashamed of 'imself.'

I asked a leading question because the old soldier told me that when his toe was sound, he, too, was a military policeman.

'Crime? Crime?' said he. 'They don't know what crime is—that lot don't—none of 'em!' He mourned over them like a benevolent old Satan looking into a busy Eden, and his last word was 'Innocent!'

The car worked her way through miles of men—men route-marching, going to dig or build bridges, or wrestle with stores and transport—four or five miles of men, and every man with eager eyes. There was no music—not even drums and fifes. I heard nothing but a distant skirl of the pipes. Trust a Scot to get his national weapon as long as there is a chief in the North! Admitting that war is a serious business, specially to the man who is being fought for, and that it may be right to carry a long face and contribute to relief funds which should be laid on the National Debt, it surely could do no harm to cheer the men with a few bands. Half the money that has been spent in treating, for example. . . .

THE NORTH IN BLUE

There was a moor among woods with a pond in a hollow, the centre of a world of tents whose population was North-Country. One heard it from far off.

'Yo' mun trail t' pick an' t' rifle at t' same time. Try again,' said the instructor.

An isolated company tried again with set seriousness, and yet again. They were used to the pick—won their living by it, in fact—and so, favoured it more than the rifle; but miners don't carry picks at the trail by instinct, though they can twiddle their rifles as one twiddles walking-sticks.

They were clad in a blue garb that disguised all contours; yet their shoulders, backs, and loins could not altogether be disguised, and these were excellent. Another company, at physical drill in shirt and trousers, showed what superb material had offered itself to be worked upon, and how much poise and directed strength had been added to that material in the past few months. When the New Army gets all its new uniform, it will gaze at itself like a new Narcissus. But the present kit is indescribable. That is why, English fashion, it has been made honourable by its wearers; and our world in the years to come will look back with reverence as well as affection on those blue slops and that epileptic cap. One far-seeing commandant who had special facilities has possessed himself of brass buttons, thousands of 'em, which he has added to his men's outfit for the moral effect of (*a*) having something to clean, and (*b*) of keeping it so. It has paid. The smartest regiment in the Service could not do itself justice in such garments, but I managed to get a view of a battalion, coming in from a walk,

at a distance which more or less subdued the—er—uniform, and they moved with the elastic swing and little quick ripple that means so much. A miner is not supposed to be as good a marcher as a townsman, but when he gets set to time and pace and learns due economy of effort, his developed back and shoulder muscles take him along very handsomely. Another battalion fell in for parade while I watched, again at a distance. They came to hand quietly and collectedly enough, and with only that amount of pressing which is caused by fear of being late. A platoon—or whatever they call it—was giving the whole of its attention to its signalling instructors, with the air of men resolved on getting the last flicker of the last cinema-film for their money. Crime in the military sense they do not know any more than their fellow-innocents up the road. It is hopeless to pretend to be other than what one is, because one's soul in this life is as exposed as one's body. It is futile to tell civilian lies—there are no civilians to listen—and they have not yet learned to tell Service ones without being detected. It is useless to sulk at any external condition of affairs, because the rest of the world with which a man is concerned is facing those identical conditions. There is neither poverty nor riches, nor any possibility of pride, except in so far as one may do one's task a little better than one's mate.

DUTIES AND DEVELOPMENTS

In the point of food they are extremely well looked after, quality and quantity, wet canteen and dry. Drafts come in all round the clock, and they have to be fed; late guards and sentries want something hot at odd times, and the big marquee-canteen is the world's gathering-place, where food, life's first interest to man in hard work, is thoroughly discussed. They can get outside of a vast o' vittles. Thus, a contractor who delivers ten thousand rations a day stands, by deputy at least, in the presence of just that number of rather fit, long, deep men. They are what is called 'independent'—a civilian weakness which they will learn to blush over in a few months, and to discourage among later recruits; but they are also very quick to pick up dodges and tricks that make a man more comfortable in camp life, and their domestic routine runs on wheels. It must have been hard at first for civilians to see the necessity for that continuous, apparently pernickity, house-maiding and 'following-up' which is vital to the comfort of large bodies of men in confined quarters. In civil life men leave these things to their women-folk, but where women are not, officers, inspecting tents, feet, and such-like, develop a she-side to their head, and evidently make their non-commissioned officers and men develop it too. A good soldier is always a bit of an

old maid. But, as I heard a private say to a sergeant in the matter of some kit chucked into a corner: 'Yo' canna keep owt redd up ony proper gate on a sand-hill.' To whom his superior officer: 'Ah know yo' canna', but yo' mun try, Billy.'

And Heaven knows they are trying hard enough—men, n.c.o.'s, and officers—with all the masked and undervoiced effort of our peoples when we are really at work. They stand at the very beginning of things; creating out of chaos, meeting emergencies as they arise; handicapped in every direction, and overcoming every handicap by simple goodwill, humour, self-sacrifice, common-sense, and such trumpery virtues. I watched their faces in the camp, and at lunch looked down a line of some twenty men in the mess-tent, wondering how many would survive to see the full splendour and significance of the work here so nobly begun. But they were not interested in the future beyond their next immediate job. They ate quickly and went out to it, and by the time I drove away again I was overtaking their battalions on the road. Not unrelated units lugged together for foot-slogging, but real battalions, of a spirit in themselves which defied even the blue slops—wave after wave of proper men, with undistracted eyes, who never talked a word about any war. But not a note of music—and they North-countrymen!

II

IRON INTO STEEL

Thanda lohā garam lohe ko marta hai (Cold iron will cut hot iron).

AT the next halt I fell into Scotland—blocks and blocks of it—a world of precise-spoken, thin-lipped men, with keen eyes. They gave me directions which led by friendly stages to the heart of another work of creation and a huge drill-shed where the miniature rifles were busy. Few things are duller than Morris-tube practice in the shed, unless it be judging triangles of error against blank-walls. I thought of the military policeman with the sore toe; for these 'innocents' were visibly enjoying both games. They sighted over the sand-bags with the gravity of surveyors, while the instructors hurled knowledge at them like sling-stones.

'Man, d'ye see your error? Step here, man, and I'll show ye.' Teacher and taught glared at each other like theologians in full debate; for this is the Scot's way of giving and getting knowledge.

At the miniature targets squad after squad rose from beside their deadly-earnest instructors, gathered up their target-cards, and whisperingly compared them, five heads together under a window.

'Aye, that was where I loosed too soon.' 'I misdoubt I took too much o' the foresight.' Not a word of hope and comfort in their achievements. Nothing but calvinistic self-criticism.

These men ran a little smaller than the North-country folk down the road, but in depth of chest, girth of fore-arm, biceps, and neck-measurement they were beautifully level and well up; and the squads at bayonet-practice had their balance, drive, and recover already. As the light failed one noticed the whites of their eyes turning towards their instructors. It reminded one that there is always a touch of the cateran in the most docile Scot, even as the wolf persists in every dog.

'And what about crime?' I demanded.

There was none. They had not joined to play the fool. Occasionally a few unstable souls who have mistaken their vocation try to return to civil life by way of dishonourable discharge, and think it 'funny' to pile up offences. The New Army has no use for those people either, and attends to them on what may be called 'democratic lines,' which is all the same as the old barrack-room court-martial. Nor does it suffer fools gladly. There is no time to instruct them. They go to other spheres.

There was, or rather is, a man who intends to join a certain battalion. He joined it once, scraped past the local doctor, and was drafted into the corps, only to be hove out for varicose veins. He went back to his accommodating doctor, repeated the process, and was again rejected. They are waiting for him now in his third incarnation; both sides are equally determined. And there was another Scot who joined, served awhile, and left, as he might have left a pit or a factory. Somehow it occurred to him that explanations were required, so he wrote to his commanding officer from his home address and asked him what he recommended him to do. The C.O., to his infinite credit, wrote back: 'Suppose you rejoin,' which the man did, and no more said. His punishment, of course, will come to him when he realises what he has done. If he does not then perish in his self-contempt (he has a good conceit of himself) he will make one first-rate non-commissioned officer.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

I had the luck to meet a Sergeant-Major, who was the Sergeant-Major of one's dreams. He had just had sure information that the kilts for his battalion were coming in a few days, so, after three months' hard work, life smiled upon him. From kilts one naturally went on to the pipes.

The battalion had its pipes—a very good set. How did it get them? Well, there was, of course, the Duke. They began with him. And there was a Scots lord concerned with the regiment. And there was a leddy of a certain clan connected with the battalion. Hence the pipes. Could anything be simpler or more logical? And when the kilts came the men would be different creatures. Were they good men, I asked. 'Yes. Verra good. Wha's to mislead 'em?' said he.

'Old soldiers,' I suggested, meanly enough. 'Rejoined privates of long ago.'

'Ay, there might have been a few such in the beginning, but they'd be more useful in the Special Reserve Battalions. Our boys are good boys, but, ye'll understand, they've to be handled—just handled a little.' Then a subaltern came in, loaded with regimental forms, and visibly leaning on the Sergeant-Major, who explained, clarified, and referred them on the proper quarters.

'Does the work come back to you?' I asked, for he had been long in pleasant civil employ.

'Ay. It does that. It just does that.' And he addressed the fluttering papers, lists, and notes, with the certainty of an old golfer on a well-known green.

Squads were at bayonet practice in the square. (They like bayonet practice, especially after looking at pictures in the illustrated dailies.) A new draft

was being introduced to its rifles. The rest were getting ready for evening parade. They were all in khaki, so one could see how they had come on in the last ten weeks. It was a result the meekest might have been proud of, but the New Army does not cultivate useless emotions. Their officers and their instructors worked over them patiently and coldly and repeatedly, with their souls in the job: and with their soul, mind, and body in the same job the men took—soaked up—the instruction. And that seems to be the note of the New Army.

WHAT THE ARMY DOES AND THINKS

They have joined for good reason. For that reason they sleep uncomplainingly double thick on barrack floors, or lie like herrings in the tents and sing hymns and other things when they are flooded out. They walk and dig half the day or all the night as required; they wear—though they will not eat—anything that is issued to them; they make themselves an organised and kindly life out of a few acres of dirt and a little canvas; they keep their edge and anneal their discipline under conditions that would depress a fox-terrier and disorganise a champion football team. They ask nothing in return save work and equipment. And being what they are, they thoroughly and

unfeignedly enjoy what they are doing; and they purpose to do much more.

But they also think. They think it vile that so many unmarried young men who are not likely to be affected by Government allowances should be so shy about sharing their life. They discuss these young men and their womenfolk by name, and imagine rude punishments for them, suited to their known characters. They discuss, too, their elders who in time past warned them of the sin of soldiering. These men, who live honourably and simply under the triple vow of Obedience, Temperance, and Poverty, recall, not without envy, the sort of life which well-kept moralists lead in the unpicketed, unsentried towns; and it galls them that such folk should continue in comfort and volubility at the expense of good men's lives, or should profit greasily at the end of it all. They stare hard, even in their blue slops, at white-collared, bowler-hatted young men, who, by the way, are just learning to drop their eyes under that gaze. In the third-class railway carriages they hint that they would like explanations from the casual 'nut,' and they explain to him wherein his explanations are unconvincing. And when they are home on leave, the slack-jawed son of the local shop-keeper, and the rising nephew of the big banker, and the dumb but cunning carter's lad receive instruction or encouragement suited to their needs and the

nation's. The older men and the officers will tell you that if the allowances are made more liberal we shall get all the men we want. But the younger men of the New Army do not worry about allowances—or, for that matter, make 'em!

There is a gulf already opening between those who have joined and those who have not; but we shall not know the width and the depth of that gulf till the war is over. The wise youth is he who jumps it now and lands in safety among the trained and armed men.

III

GUNS AND SUPPLY

Under all and after all the Wheel carries everything.—*Proverb.*

ONE had known the place for years as a picturesque old house, standing in a peaceful park; had watched the growth of certain young oaks along a new-laid avenue, and applauded the owner's enterprise in turning a stretch of pasture to plough. There are scores of such estates in England which the motorist, through passing so often, comes to look upon almost as his own. In a single day the brackened turf between the oaks and the iron road-fence blossomed into tents, and the drives were all cut up with hoofs and wheels. A little later, one's car sweeping home of warm September nights was stopped by sentries, who asked her name and business; for the owner of that retired house and discreetly wooded park had gone elsewhere in haste, and his estate was taken over by the military.

Later still, one met men and horses arguing with

each other for miles about that country-side; or the car would be flung on her brakes by artillery issuing from cross-lanes—clean batteries jingling off to their work on the Downs, and hungry ones coming back to meals. Every day brought the men and the horses and the weights behind them to a better understanding, till in a little while the car could pass a quarter of a mile of them without having to hoot more than once.

'Why are you so virtuous?' she asked of a section encountered at a blind and brambly corner. 'Why do you obtrude your personality less than an average tax-cart?'

'Because,' said a driver, his arm flung up to keep the untrimmed hedge from sweeping his cap off, 'because those are our blessed orders. We don't do it for love.'

No one accuses the Gunner of maudlin affection for anything except his beasts and his weapons. He hasn't the time. He serves at least three jealous gods—his horse and all its saddlery and harness; his gun, whose least detail of efficiency is more important than men's lives; and, when these have been attended to, the never-ending mystery of his art commands him.

It was a wettish, windy day when I visited the so-long-known house and park. Cock pheasants ducked in and out of trim rhododendron clumps, neat gates opened into sacredly preserved vegetable

gardens, the many-coloured leaves of specimen trees pasted themselves stickily against sodden tent walls, and there was a mixture of circus smells from the horse-lines and the faint, civilised breath of chrysanthemums in the potting sheds. The main drive was being relaid with a foot of flint; the other approaches were churned and pitted under the gun wheels and heavy supply wagons. Great breadths of what had been well-kept turf between unbrowsed trees were blanks of slippery brown wetness, dotted with picketed horses and field-kitchens. It was a crazy mixture of stark necessity and manicured luxury, all cheek by jowl, in the undiscriminating rain.

SERVICE CONDITIONS

The cook-houses, store-rooms, forges, and work-shops were collections of tilts, poles, rick-cloths, and odd lumber, beavered together as on service. The officers' mess was a thin, soaked marquee.

Less than a hundred yards away were dozens of vacant, well-furnished rooms in the big brick house, of which the Staff furtively occupied one corner. There was accommodation for very many men in its stables and out-houses alone; or the whole building might have been gutted and rearranged for barracks twice over in the last three months.

Scattered among the tents were rows of half-

built tin sheds, the ready-prepared lumber and the corrugated iron lying beside them, waiting to be pieced together like children's toys. But there were no workmen. I was told that they had come that morning, but had knocked off because it was wet.

'I see. And where are the batteries?" I demanded.

'Out at work, of course. They've been out since seven.'

'How shocking! In this dreadful weather, too!'

'They took some bread and cheese with them. They'll be back about dinner-time if you care to wait. Here's one of our field-kitchens.'

Batteries look after their own stomachs, and are not catered for by contractors. The cook-house was a wagon-tilt. The wood, being damp, smoked a good deal. One thought of the wide, adequate kitchen ranges and the concrete passages of the service quarters in the big house just behind. One even dared to think Teutonically of the perfectly good panelling and the thick hard-wood floors that could——

'Service conditions, you see,' said my guide, as the cook inspected the baked meats and the men inside the wagon-tilt grated the carrots and prepared the onions. It was old work to them after all these months—done swiftly, with the clean economy of effort that camp life teaches.

'What are these lads when they're at home?' I inquired.

'Londoners chiefly—all sorts and conditions.'

The cook in shirt sleeves made another investigation, and sniffed judicially. He might have been cooking since the Peninsular. He looked at his watch and across towards the park gates. He was responsible for one hundred and sixty rations, and a battery has the habit of saying quite all that it thinks of its food.

'How often do the batteries go out?' I continued.

''Bout five days a week. You see, we're being worked up a little.'

'And have they got plenty of ground to work over?'

'Oh—yes-s.'

'What's the difficulty this time? Birds?'

'No; but we got orders the other day not to go over a golf-course. That rather knocks the bottom out of tactical schemes.'

Perfect shamelessness, like perfect virtue, is impregnable; and, after all, the lightnings of this war, which have brought out so much resolve and self-sacrifice, must show up equally certain souls and institutions that are irredeemable.

The weather took off a little before noon. The carpenters could have put in a good half-day's work on the sheds, and even if they had been rained upon they had roofs with fires awaiting

their return. The batteries had none of these things.

THE GUNNER AT HOME

They came in at last far down the park, heralded by that unmistakable half-grumble, half-grunt of guns on the move. The picketed horses heard it first, and one of them neighed long and loud, which proved that he had abandoned civilian habits. Horses in stables and mews seldom do more than snicker, even when they are halves of separated pairs. But these gentlemen had a corporate life of their own now, and knew what 'pulling together' means.

When a battery comes into camp it 'parks' all six guns at the appointed place, side by side in one mathematically straight line, and the accuracy of the alignment is, like ceremonial-drill with the Foot, a fair test of its attainments. The ground was no treat for parking. Specimen trees and draining ditches had to be avoided and circumvented. The gunners, their reins, the guns, the ground, were equally wet, and the slob dropped away like gruel from the brake-shoes. And they were Londoners —clerks, mechanics, shop assistants, and delivery men—anything and everything that you please. But they were all home and at home in their saddles and seats. They said nothing; their officers said little enough to them. They came in

across what had once been turf; wheeled with tight traces; halted, unhooked; the wise teams stumped off to their pickets, and, behold, the six guns were left precisely where they should have been left to the fraction of an inch. You could see the wind blowing the last few drops of wet from each leather muzzle-cover at exactly the same angle. It was all old known evolutions, taken unconsciously in the course of their day's work by men well abreast of it.

'Our men have one advantage,' said a voice. 'As Territorials they were introduced to unmade horses once a year at training. So they've never been accustomed to made horses.'

'And what do the horses say about it all?' I asked, remembering what I had seen on the road in the early days.

'They said a good deal at first, but our chaps could make allowances for 'em. They know now.'

Allah never intended the Gunner to talk. His own arm does that for him. The batteries off-saddled in silence, though one noticed on all sides little quiet caresses between man and beast—affectionate nuzzlings and nose-slappings. Surely the Gunner's relation to his horse is more intimate even than the cavalryman's; for a lost horse only turns cavalry into infantry, but trouble in a gun team may mean death all round. And this is the Gunner's war. The young wet officers said so

joyously as they passed to and fro picking up scandal about breast-straps and breechings, examining the collars of ammunition-wagon teams, and listening to remarks on shoes. Local blacksmiths, assisted by the battery itself, do the shoeing. There are master smiths and important farriers, who have cheerfully thrown up good wages to help the game, and their horses reward them by keeping fit. A fair proportion of the horses are aged—there was never a Gunner yet satisfied with his team or its rations till he had left the battery—but they do their work as steadfastly and wholeheartedly as the men. I am persuaded the horses like being in society and working out their daily problems of draught and direction. The English, and Londoners particularly, are the kindest and most reasonable of folk with animals. If it were not our business strictly to underrate ourselves for the next few years, one would say that the Territorial batteries had already done wonders. But perhaps it is better to let it all go with the grudging admission wrung out of a wringing wet bombardier, 'Well, it isn't so dam' bad—considerin'.'

I left them taking their dinner in mess tins to their tents, with a strenuous afternoon's cleaning-up ahead of them. The big park held some thousands of men. I had seen no more than a few hundreds, and had missed the howitzer-batteries after all.

A cock pheasant chaperoned me down the drive,

complaining loudly that where he was used to walk with his ladies under the beech trees, some unsporting people had built a miniature landscape with tiny villages, churches, and factories, and came there daily to point cannon at it.

'Keep away from that place,' said I, 'or you'll find yourself in a field-kitchen.'

'Not me!' he crowed. 'I'm as sacred as golf-courses.'

MECHANISM AND MECHANICS

There was a little town a couple of miles down the road where one used to lunch in the old days, and had the hotel to oneself. Now there are six ever-changing officers in billet there, and the astonished houses quiver all day to traction engines and high-piled lorries. A unit of the Army Service Corps and some mechanical transport lived near the station, and fed the troops for twenty miles around.

'Are your people easy to find?' I asked of a wandering private, with the hands of a sweep, the head of a Christian among lions, and suicide in his eye.

'Well, the A.S.C. are in the Territorial Drill Hall for one thing; and for another you're likely to hear *us*! There's some motors come in from Bulford.' He snorted and passed on, smelling of petrol.

The drill-shed was peace and comfort. The A.S.C. were getting ready there for pay-day and for a concert that evening. Outside in the wind and the occasional rain-spurts, life was different. The Bulford motors and some other crocks sat on a side-road between what had been the local garage and a newly-erected workshop of creaking scaffold-poles and bellying slatting rick-cloths, where a forge glowed and general repairs were being effected. Beneath the motors men lay on their backs and called their friends to pass them spanners, or, for pity's sake, to shove another sack under their mud-wreathed heads.

A corporal, who had been nine years a fitter and seven in a city garage, briefly and briskly outlined the more virulent diseases that develop in Government rolling-stock. (I heard quite a lot about Bulford.) Hollow voices from beneath eviscerated gear-boxes confirmed him. We withdrew to the shelter of the rick-cloth workshop—that corporal; the sergeant who had been a carpenter, with a business of his own, and, incidentally, had served through the Boer War; another sergeant who was a member of the Master Builders' Association; and a private who had also been fitter, chauffeur, and a few other things. The third sergeant, who kept a poultry-farm in Surrey, had some duty elsewhere.

A man at a carpenter's bench was finishing

a spoke for a newly-painted cart. He squinted along it.

'That's funny,' said the master builder. 'Of course in his own business he'd chuck his job sooner than do wood-work. But it's *all* funny.'

'What I grudge,' a sergeant struck in, 'is havin' to put mechanics to loading and unloading beef. That's where modified conscription for the beauties that won't roll up 'ld be useful to *us*. We want hewers of wood, we do. And I'd hew 'em!'

'*I* want that file.' This was a private in a hurry, come from beneath an unspeakable Bulford. Some one asked him musically if he 'would tell his wife in the morning who he was with to-night.'

'You'll find it in the tool-chest,' said the sergeant. It was his own sacred tool-chest which he had contributed to the common stock.

'And what sort of men have you got in this unit?' I asked.

'Every sort you can think of. There isn't a thing you couldn't have made here if you wanted to. But'—the corporal, who had been a fitter, spoke with fervour—'you can't expect us to make big-ends, can you? That five-ton Bulford lorry out there in the wet——'

'And she isn't the worst,' said the master builder. 'But it's all part of the game. *And* so funny when you come to think of it. Me painting carts, and certificated plumbers loading frozen beef!'

'What about the discipline?' I asked.

The corporal turned a fitter's eye on me. 'The mechanism is the discipline,' said he, with most profound truth. 'Jockeyin' a sick car on the road is discipline, too. *What* about the discipline?' He turned to the sergeant with the carpenter's chest. There was one sergeant of Regulars, with twenty years' service behind him and a knowledge of human nature. He struck in.

'*You* ought to know. You've just been made corporal,' said that sergeant of Regulars.

'Well, there's so much which everybody knows has got to be done that—that—why, we all turn in and do it,' quoth the corporal. '*I* don't have any trouble with my lot.'

'Yes; that's how the case stands,' said the sergeant of Regulars. 'Come and see our stores.'

They were beautifully arranged in a shed which felt like a monastery after the windy, clashing world without; and the young private who acted as checker—he came from some railway office—had the thin, keen face of the cleric.

'We're in billets in the town,' said the sergeant who had been a carpenter. 'But I'm a married man. I shouldn't care to have men billeted on *us* at home, an' I don't want to inconvenience other people. So I've knocked up a bunk for myself on the premises. It's handier to the stores, too.'

'THE HUMOUR OF IT'

We entered what had been the local garage. The mechanical transport were in full possession, tinkering the gizzards of more cars. We discussed chewed-up gears (samples to hand), and the civil population's old-time views of the military. The corporal told a tale of a clergyman in a Midland town who, only a year ago, on the occasion of some manœuvres, preached a sermon warning his flock to guard their womenfolk against the soldiers.

'And when you think—when you *know*,' said the corporal, 'what life in those little towns really is!' He whistled.

'See that old landau,' said he, opening the door of an ancient wreck jammed against a wall. 'That's two of our chaps' dressing-room. They don't care to be billeted, so they sleep 'tween the landau and the wall. It's handier for their work, too. Work comes in at all hours. I wish I was cavalry. There's some use in cursing a horse.'

Truly, it's an awful thing to belong to a service where speech brings no alleviation.

'*You!*' A private with callipers turned from the bench by the window. 'You'd die outside of a garage. But what you said about civilians and soldiers is all out of date now.'

The sergeant of Regulars permitted himself a small, hidden smile. The private with the callipers had been some twelve weeks a soldier.

'I don't say it isn't,' said the corporal. 'I'm saying what it used to be.'

'We-ell,' the private screwed up the callipers, 'didn't you feel a little bit that way yourself—when you were a civilian?'

'I—I don't think I did.' The corporal was taken aback. 'I don't think I ever thought about it.'

'Ah! *There* you are!' said the private, very drily.

Some one laughed in the shadow of the landau dressing-room. 'Anyhow, we're all in it now, Private Percy,' said a voice.

There must be a good many thousand conversations of this kind being held all over England nowadays. Our breed does not warble much about patriotism or Fatherland, but it has a wonderful sense of justice, even when its own shortcomings are concerned.

We went over to the drill-shed to see the men paid. The first man I ran across there was a sergeant who had served in the Mounted Infantry in the South African picnic that we used to call a war. He had been a private chauffeur for some years—long enough to catch the professional look, but was joyously reverting to service type again.

The men lined up, were called out, saluted emphatically at the pay-table, and fell back with their emoluments. They smiled at each other.

'An' it's *all* so funny,' murmured the master builder in my ear. 'About a quarter—no, less

than a quarter—of what one 'ud be making on one's own!'

'Fifty bob a week, cottage, and all found, I was. An' only two cars to look after,' said a voice behind. 'An' if I'd been asked—simply *asked*—to lie down in the mud all the afternoon——!' The speaker looked at his wages with awe. Some one wanted to know, *sotto voce*, if 'that was union rates,' and the grin spread among the uniformed experts. The joke, you will observe, lay in situations thrown up, businesses abandoned, and pleasant prospects cut short at the nod of duty.

'Thank Heaven!' said one of them at last, 'it's too dark to work on those blessed Bulfords any more to-day. We'll get ready for the concert.'

But it was not too dark, half an hour later, for my car to meet a big lorry storming back in the wind and the wet from the northern camps. She gave me London allowance—half one inch between hub and hub—swung her corner like a Brooklands professional, changed gear for the uphill with a sweet click, and charged away. For aught I knew, she was driven by an ex-'fifty-bob-a-week-a-cottage-and-all-found'-er, who next month might be dodging shells with her and thinking it '*all* so funny.'

Horse, Foot, even the Guns may sometimes get a little rest, but so long as men eat thrice a day there is no rest for the Army Service Corps. They carry the campaign on their all-sustaining backs.

IV

CANADIANS IN CAMP

Before you hit the buffalo, find out where the rest of the herd is.—Proverb.

THIS particular fold of downs behind Salisbury might have been a hump of prairie near Winnipeg. The team that came over the rise, widely spaced between pole-bar and whiffletrees, were certainly children of the prairie. They shied at the car. Their driver asked them dispassionately what they thought they were doing, anyway. They put their wise heads together, and did nothing at all. Yes. Oh, yes! said the driver. They were Western horses. They weighed better than twelve hundred apiece. He himself was from Edmonton way. The Camp? Why, the camp was right ahead along up this road. No chance to miss it, and, 'Sa-ay! Look out for our lorries!'

A fleet of them hove in sight going at the rate of knots, and keeping their left with a conscientiousness only learned when you come out of a country where nearly all the Provinces (except British Columbia)

keep to the right. Every line of them, from steering-wheel to brake-shoes, proclaimed their nationality. Three perfectly efficient young men who were sprinkling a golf-green with sifted earth ceased their duties to stare at them. Two riding-boys (also efficient) on racehorses, their knees under their chins and their saddles between their horses' ears, cantered past on the turf. The rattle of the motors upset their catsmeat, so one could compare their style of riding with that of an officer loping along to overtake a string of buck-wagons that were trotting towards the horizon. The riding-boys have to endure sore hardship nowadays. One gentleman has already complained that his 'private gallops' are being cut up by gun-wheels and 'irremediably ruined.'

Then more lorries, contractors' wagons, and increasing vileness of the battered road-bed, till one slid through a rude gate into a new world, of canvas as far as the eye could reach, and beyond that outlying clouds of tents. It is not a contingent that Canada has sent, but an army—horse, foot, guns, engineers, and all details, fully equipped. Taking that army's strength at thirty-three thousand, and the Dominion's population at eight million, the camp is Canada on the scale of one to two hundred and forty—an entire nation unrolled across a few square miles of turf and tents and huts.

Here I could study at close hand 'a Colony'

yearning to shake off 'the British yoke.' For, beyond question, they yearned—the rank and file unreservedly, the officers with more restraint but equal fervour—and the things they said about the Yoke were simply lamentable.

From Nova Scotia to Victoria, and every city, township, distributing-centre, and divisional point between; from sub-tropical White River and sultry Jackfish to the ultimate north that lies up beside Alaska; from Kootenay, and Nelson of the fruit-farms, to Prince Edward Island, where motors are not allowed; they yearned to shake it off, with the dust of England from their feet, 'at once and some time before that.'

I had been warned that when Armageddon came the 'Colonies' would 'revolt against the Mother Country as one man'; but I had no notion I should ever see the dread spectacle with my own eyes—or the 'one man' so tall!

Joking apart, the Canadian Army wants to get to work. It admits that London is 'some city,' but says it did not take the trip to visit London only. Armageddon, which so many people in Europe knew was bound to come, has struck Canada out of the blue, like a noonday murder in a small town. How will they feel when they actually view some of the destruction in France, these men who are used to making and owning their homes? And what effect will it have on

their land's outlook and development for the next few generations? Older countries may possibly slip back into some sort of toleration. New peoples, in their first serious war, like girls in their first real love-affair, neither forget nor forgive. That is why it pays to keep friends with the young.

And such young! They ran inches above all normal standards, not in a few companies or battalions, but through the whole corps; and it was not easy to pick out foolish or even dull faces among them. Details going about their business through the camp's much mud; defaulters on fatigue; orderlies, foot and mounted; the procession of lorry-drivers; companies falling in for inspection; battalions parading; brigades moving off for manœuvres; batteries clanking in from the ranges; they were all supple, free, and intelligent; and moved with a lift and a drive that made one sing for joy.

CAMP GOSSIP

Only a few months ago that entire collection poured into Valcartier camp in pink shirts and straw hats, desperately afraid they might not be in time. Since then they have been taught several things. Notably, that the more independent the individual soldier, the more does he need forethought and endless care when he is in bulk.

'Just because we were all used to looking after ourselves in civil life,' said an officer, 'we used to send parties out without rations. And the parties used to go, too! And we expected the boys to look after their own feet. But we're wiser now.'

'They're learning the same thing in the New Army,' I said. 'Company officers have to be taught to be mothers and housekeepers and sanitary inspectors. Where do your men come from?'

'Tell me some place that they don't come from,' said he, and I could not. The men had rolled up from everywhere between the Arctic circle and the border, and I was told that those who could not get into the first contingent were moving heaven and earth and local politicians to get into the second.

'There's some use in politics now,' that officer reflected. 'But it's going to thin the voting-lists at home.'

A good many of the old South African crowd (the rest are coming) were present and awfully correct. Men last met as privates between De Aar and Belmont were captains and majors now; while one lad who, to the best of his ability, had painted Cape Town pink in those fresh years, was a grim non-commissioned officer worth his disciplined weight in dollars.

'*I* didn't remind Dan of old times when he turned up at Valcartier disguised as a respectable

citizen,' said my informant. 'I just roped him in for my crowd. He's a father to 'em. *He* knows.'

'And have you many cheery souls coming on?' I asked.

'Not many; but it's always the same with a first contingent. You take everything that offers and weed the bravoes out later.'

'*We* don't weed,' said an officer of artillery. 'Any one who has had his passage paid for by the Canadian Government stays with us till he eats out of our hand. *And* he does. They make the best men in the long run,' he added. I thought of a friend of mine who is now disabusing two or three 'old soldiers' in a Service corps of the idea that they can run the battalion, and I laughed. The Gunner was right. 'Old soldiers,' after a little loving care, become valuable and virtuous.

A company of Foot was drawn up under the lee of a fir plantation behind us. They were a miniature of their army as their army was of their people, and one could feel the impact of strong personality almost like a blow.

'If you'd believe it,' said a cavalryman, 'we're forbidden to cut into that little wood-lot, yonder! Not one stick of it may we have! We could make shelters for our horses in a day out of that stuff.'

'But it's timber!' I gasped. 'Sacred, tame trees!'

'Oh, we know what wood is! They issue it

to us by the pound. Wood to burn—by the pound! What's wood for, anyway?'

'And when do you think we shall be allowed to go?' some one asked, not for the first time.

'By and by,' said I. 'And then you'll have to detail half your army to see that your equipment isn't stolen from you.'

'What!' cried an old Strathcona Horse. He looked anxiously towards the horse-lines.

'I was thinking of your mechanical transport and your travelling workshops and a few other things that you've got.'

I got away from those large men on their windy hill-top, and slid through mud and past mechanical transport and troops untold towards Lark Hill. On the way I passed three fresh-cut pine sticks, laid and notched one atop of the other to shore up a caving bank. Trust a Canadian or a beaver within gunshot of standing timber!

ENGINEERS AND APPLIANCES

Lark Hill is where the Canadian Engineers live, in the midst of a profligate abundance of tools and carts, pontoon wagons, field telephones, and other mouth-watering gear. Hundreds of tin huts are being built there, but quite leisurely, by contract. I noticed three workmen, at eleven o'clock of that

Monday forenoon, as drunk as Davy's sow, reeling and shouting across the landscape. So far as I could ascertain, the workmen do not work extra shifts, nor even, but I hope this is incorrect, on Saturday afternoons; and I think they take their full hour at noon these short days.

Every camp throws up men one has met at the other end of the earth; so, of course, the Engineer C.O. was an ex-South African Canadian.

'Some of our boys are digging a trench over yonder,' he said. 'I'd like you to look at 'em.'

The boys seemed to average five feet ten inches, with thirty-seven inch chests. The soil was unaccommodating chalk.

'What are you?' I asked of the first pickaxe.

'Private.'

'Yes, but before that?'

'McGill (University understood). Nineteen twelve.'

'And that boy with the shovel?'

'Queen's, I think. No; he's Toronto.'

And thus the class in applied geology went on half up the trench, under supervision of a Corporal-Bachelor-of-Science with a most scientific biceps. They were young; they were beautifully fit, and they were all truly thankful that they lived in these high days.

Sappers, like sergeants, take care to make themselves comfortable. The corps were dealing with

all sorts of little domestic matters in the way of arrangements for baths, which are cruelly needed, and an apparatus for depopulating shirts, which is even more wanted. Healthy but unwashen men sleeping on the ground are bound to develop certain things which at first disgust them, but later are accepted as an unlovely part of the game. It would be quite easy to make bakehouses and super-heated steam fittings to deal with the trouble. The huts themselves stand on brick piers, from one to three feet above ground. The board floors are not grooved or tongued, so there is ample ventilation from beneath; but they have installed decent cooking ranges and gas, and the men have already made themselves all sorts of handy little labour-saving gadgets. They would do this if they were in the real desert. Incidentally, I came across a delightful bit of racial instinct. A man had been told to knock up a desk out of broken packing-cases. There is only one type of desk in Canada —the roller-top, with three shelves each side the knee-hole, characteristic sloping sides, raised back, and long shelf in front of the writer. He reproduced it faithfully, barring, of course, the roller-top; and the thing leaped to the eye out of its English office surroundings. The Engineers do not suffer for lack of talents. Their senior officers appear to have been the heads, and their juniors the assistants, in big concerns that wrestle with

unharnessed nature. (There is a tale of the building of a bridge in Valcartier Camp which is not bad hearing.) The rank and file include miners; road, trestle, and bridge men; iron construction men who, among other things, are steeplejacks; whole castes of such as deal in high explosives for a living; loco-drivers, superintendents, too, for aught I know, and a solid packing of selected machinists, mechanics, and electricians. Unluckily, they were all a foot or so too tall for me to tell them that, even if their equipment escaped at the front, they would infallibly be raided for their men.

AN UNRELATED DETACHMENT

I left McGill, Queen's, and Toronto still digging in their trench, which another undergraduate, mounted and leading a horse, went out of his way to jump standing. My last glimpse was of a little detachment, with five or six South African ribbons among them, who were being looked over by an officer. No one thought it strange that they should have embodied themselves and crossed the salt seas independently as 'So-and-So's Horse.' (It is best to travel with a title these days.) Once arrived, they were not at all particular, except that they meant to join the Army, and the lonely batch was stating its qualifications as Engineers.

'They get over any way and every way,' said my companion. 'Swimming, I believe.'

'But who was the So-and-So that they were christened after?' I asked.

'I guess he was the man who financed 'em or grub-staked 'em while they were waiting. He may be one of 'em in that crowd now; or he may be a provincial magnate at home getting another bunch together.'

THE VANGUARD OF A NATION

Then I went back to the main camp for a last look at that wonderful army, where the tin-roofed messes take French conversation lessons with the keen-faced French-Canadian officers, and where one sees esprit-de-corps in the making. Nowhere is local sentiment stronger than in Canada. East and West, lake and maritime provinces, prairie and mountain, fruit district and timber lands—they each thrill to it. The West keeps one cold blue open-air eye on the townful East. Winnipeg sits between, posing alternately as sophisticated metropolis and simple prairie. Alberta, of the thousand horses, looks down from her high-peaked saddle on all who walk on their feet; and British Columbia thanks God for an equable climate, and that she is not like Ottawa, full of politicians and frozen sludge. Quebec, unassailable in her years

and experience, smiles tolerantly on the Nova Scotian, for he has a history too, and asks Montreal if any good thing can come out of Brandon, Moose Jaw, or Regina. They discuss each other outrageously, as they know each other intimately, over four thousand miles of longitude—their fathers, their families, and all the connections. Which is useful when it comes to sizing up the merits of a newly-promoted non-commissioned officer or the capacities of a quarter-master.

As their Army does and suffers, and its record begins to blaze, fierce pride of regiment will be added to local love and the national pride that backs and envelops all. But that pride is held in very severe check now; for they are neither provinces nor tribes but a welded people fighting in the War of Liberty. They permit themselves to hope that the physique of their next contingent will not be worse than that of the present. They believe that their country can send forward a certain number of men and a certain number behind that, all equipped to a certain scale. Of discomforts endured, of the long learning and relearning and waiting on, they say nothing. They do not hint what they will do when their hour strikes, though they more than hint their longing for that hour. In all their talk I caught no phrase that could be twisted into the shadow of a boast or any claim to superiority, even in respect to their kit and outfit;

no word or implication of self-praise for any sacrifice made or intended. It was their rigid humility that impressed one as most significant—and, perhaps, most menacing for such as may have to deal with this vanguard of an armed Nation.

V

INDIAN TROOPS

Larai meṅ laddu nahiṅ batte (War is not sugar-plums).—*Hindi Proverb.*

WORKING from the East to the West of England, through a countryside alive with troops of all arms, the car came at dusk into a cathedral town entirely inhabited by one type of regiment. The telegraph-office was an orderly jam of solid, large, made men, with years of discipline behind them and the tan of Indian suns on their faces—Englishmen still so fresh from the troopships that one of them asked me, 'What's the day o' the month?' They were advising friends of their arrival in England, or when they might be expected on short leave at the week's end; and the fresh-faced telegraph girls behind the grilles worked with six pairs of hands apiece and all the goodwill and patience in the world to back them. That same young woman who, with nothing to do, makes you wait ten

minutes for a penny stamp while she finishes a talk with a lady-friend, will, at a crisis, go on till she drops, and keep her temper throughout. 'Well, *if* that's her village,' I heard one of the girls say to an anxious soul, 'I tell *you* that that will be her telegraph-office. You leave it to me. *She'll* get it all right.'

He backed out, and a dozen more quietly took his place. Their regiments hailed from all the old known stations of the East and beyond that into the Far East again. They cursed their cool barrack accommodation; they rejoiced in the keen autumn smells, and paraded the long street all filled with 'Europe shops'; while their officers and their officers' wives, and, I think, mothers who had come down to snatch a glimpse of their boys, crowded the hotels, and the little unastonished Anglo-Indian children circulated round the knees of big friends they had made aboardship and asked, 'Where are you going now?'

One caught scraps of our old gipsy talk—names of boarding-houses, agents' addresses: 'Milly stays with mother, of course.' 'I'm taking Jack down to school to-morrow. It's past half-term, but that doesn't matter nowadays'; and cheery farewells between men and calm-eyed women. Except for the frocks, it might have been an evening assembly at any station bandstand in India.

Outside, on the surging pavements, a small boy

cried: 'Paper! Evenin' paper!' Then seductively: '*Kargus!*'

'What?' I said, thinking my ears had cheated me.

'*Dekko! Kargus!*' said he. ('Look here! Paper!')

'Why on earth d'you say that?'

'Because the men like it,' he replied, and slapped an evening paper (no change for a penny) into the hand of a man in a helmet.

Who shall say that the English are not adaptable?

The car swam bonnet-deep through a mile of troops; and a mile up the road one could hear the deep hum of all those crowded streets that the cathedral bells were chiming over. It was only one small block of Anglo-India getting ready to take its place in the all-devouring Line.

SCREW-GUNS

An hour later at —— (Shall we ever be able to name people and places outright again?) the wind brought up one whiff—one unmistakable whiff—of *ghi*. Somewhere among the English pines that, for the moment, pretended to be the lower slopes of the Dun, there were native troops. A mule squealed in the dark and set off half-a-dozen

others. It was screw-guns—batteries of them, waiting their turn also at the game. Morning showed them in their immaculate lines as though they had just marched in from Jutogh—little, low guns with their ammunition; very big English gunners in disengaged attitudes which, nevertheless, did not encourage stray civilians to poke and peer into things; and the native drivers all busied over their charges. True, the wind was bitter, and many of the drivers had tied up their heads, but so one does at Quetta in the cold weather—not to mention Peshawur—and, said a naick of drivers: 'It is not the cold for which we have no liking. It is the wet. The English air is good, but water falls at all seasons. Yet notwithstanding, we of this battery (and, oh, the pride men can throw into a mere number!) have not lost one mule. Neither at sea nor on land have we *one* lost. That can be shown, sahib.'

Then one heard the deep racking tobacco-cough in the lee of a tent where four or five men—Kangra folk by the look of them—were drinking tobacco out of a cow's horn. Their own country's tobacco, be sure, for English tobacco. . . . But there was no need to explain. Who would have dreamed to smell bazar-tobacco on a south country golf links?

A large proportion of the men are, of course, Sikhs, to whom tobacco is forbidden; the Havildar

Major himself was a Sikh of the Sikhs. He spoke, of all things in this strange world, of the late Mr. M. McAuliffe's monumental book on the Sikh religion, saying, not without warrant, that McAuliffe Sahib had translated into English much of the Holy Book—the great Grunth Sahib that lives at Amritzar. He enlarged, too, on the ancient prophecy among the Sikhs—that a hatted race should some day come out of the sea and lead them to victory all the earth over. So spoke Bir Singh, erect and enormous beneath the grey English skies. He hailed from a certain place called Banalu, near Patiala, where many years ago two Sikh soldiers executed a striking but perfectly just vengeance on certain villagers who had oppressed their young brother, a cultivator. They had gone to the extreme limits of abasement and conciliation. This failing, they took leave for a week-end and slew the whole tribe of their enemies. The story is buried in old Government reports, but when Bir Singh implied that he and his folk were orthodox I had no doubt of it. And behind him stood another giant, who knew, for his village was but a few miles up the Shalimar road, every foot of Lahore city. He brought word that there had been great floods at home, so that the risen Ravi river had touched the very walls of Runjit Singh's Fort. And that was only last rains—and, behold!—here he was now in England waiting orders to go to

this fight which, he understood, was not at all a small fight, but a fight of fights, in which all the world and 'our Raj' was engaged. The trouble in India was that all the young men—the mere *jiwans* —wanted to come out at once, which, he said, was manifestly unjust to older men, who had waited so long. However, merit and patience had secured their reward, and the battery was here, and it would do the hot *jiwans* no harm to stay at home, and be zealous at drill until orders came for them in their turn. 'Young men think that everything good in this world is theirs by right, sahib.'

Then came the big, still English gunners, who are trained to play with the little guns. They took one such gun and melted it into trifling pieces of not more than a hundred and fifty pounds each, and reassembled it, and explained its innermost heart till even a layman could understand. There is a lot to understand about screw-guns—specially the new kind. But the gunner of to-day, like his ancestor, does not talk much, except in his own time and place, when he is as multitudinously amazing as the Blue Marine.

THE MULE LINES

We went over to see the mule lines. I detest the whole generation of these parrot-mouthed hybrids, American, Egyptian, Andalusian, or up-country:

so it gave me particular pleasure to hear a Pathan telling one chestnut beast who objected to having its mane hogged any more, what sort of lady-horse his mamma had been. But *qua* animals, they were a lovely lot, and had long since given up blowing and finicking over English fodder.

'Is there any sickness? Why is yonder mule lying down?' I demanded, as though all the lines could not see I was a shuddering amateur.

'There is no sickness, sahib? That mule lies down for his own pleasure. Also, to get out of the wind. He is very clever. He is from Hindustan,' said the man with the horse-clippers.

'And thou?'

'*I* am a Pathan,' said he with impudent grin and true border cock of the turban, and he did me the honour to let me infer.

The lines were full of talk as the men went over their animals. They were not worrying themselves over this new country of Belait. It was the regular gossip of food and water and firewood, and where So-and-so had hid the curry-comb.

Talking of cookery, the orthodox men have been rather put out by English visitors who come to the cook-houses and stare directly *at* the food while it is being prepared. Sensible men do not object to this, because they know that these Englishmen have no evil intention nor any evil eye; but sometimes a narrow-souled purist (toothache

or liver makes a man painfully religious) will 'spy strangers,' and insist on the strict letter of the law, and then every one who wishes to be orthodox must agree with him—on an empty stomach, too —and wait till a fresh mess has been cooked. This is *taklif*—a burden—for where the intention is good and war is afoot much can and should be overlooked. Moreover, this war is not like any other war. It is a war of *our* Raj—'everybody's war,' as they say in the bazaars. And that is another reason why it does not matter if an Englishman stares at one's food. This I gathered in small pieces after watering time when the mules had filed up to the troughs in the twilight, hundreds of them, and the drivers grew discursive on the way to the lines.

The last I saw of them was in the early cold morning, all in marching order, jinking and jingling down a road through woods.

'Where are you going?'

'God knows!'

THE INN OF GOOD-BYES

It might have been for exercise merely, or it might be down to the sea and away to the front for the battle of 'Our Raj.' The quiet hotel where people sit together and talk in earnest strained pairs is well used to such departures. The officers of

a whole Division—the raw cuts of their tent-circles lie still unhealed on the links—dined there by scores; mothers and relatives came down from the uttermost parts of Scotland for a last look at their boys, and found beds goodness knows where: very quiet little weddings, too, set out from its doors to the church opposite. The Division went away a century of weeks ago by the road that the mule-battery took. Many of the civilians who pocketed the wills signed and witnessed in the smoking-room are full-blown executors now; some of the brides are widows.

And it is not nice to remember that when the hotel was so filled that not even another pleading mother could be given a place in which to lie down and have her cry out—not at all nice to remember that it never occurred to any of the comfortable people in the large but sparsely inhabited houses around that they might have offered a night's lodging, even to an unintroduced stranger.

GREATHEART AND CHRISTIANA

There were hospitals up the road preparing and being prepared for the Indian wounded. In one of these lay a man of, say, a Biluch regiment, sorely hit. Word had come from his colonel in France to the colonel's wife in England that she should seek till she found that very man and got news from his

very mouth—news to send to his family and village. She found him at last, and he was very bewildered to see her there, because he had left her and her child on the verandah of the bungalow, long and long ago, when he and his colonel and the regiment went down to take ship for the war. How had she come? Who had guarded her during her train-journey of so many days? And, above all, how had the baba endured that sea which caused strong men to collapse? Not till all these matters had been cleared up in fullest detail did Greatheart on his cot permit his colonel's wife to waste one word on his own insignificant concerns. And that she should have wept filled him with real trouble. Truly, this is the war of 'Our Raj!'

VI

TERRITORIAL BATTALIONS

To excuse oneself to oneself is human: but to excuse oneself to one's children is Hell.—*Arabic Proverb.*

BILLETED troops are difficult to get at. There are thousands of them in a little old town by the side of an even older park up the London Road, but to find a particular battalion is like ferreting unstopped burrows.

'The Umpty-Umpth, were you looking for?' said a private in charge of a side-car. 'We're the Eenty-Eenth. 'Only came in last week. I've never seen this place before. It's pretty. Hold on! There's a postman. He'll know.'

He, too, was in khaki, bowed between mail-bags, and his accent was of a far and coaly county.

'I'm none too sure,' said he, 'but I think I saw——'

Here a third man cut in.

'Yon's t' battalion, marchin' into t' park now. Roon! Happen tha'll catch 'em.'

They turned out to be Territorials with a history behind them; but that I didn't know till later; and their band and cyclists. Very polite were those rear-rank cyclists—who pushed their loaded machines with one vast hand apiece.

They were strangers, they said. They had only come here a few days ago. But they knew the South well. They had been in Gloucestershire, which was a very nice southern place.

Then their battalion, I hazarded, was of northern extraction?

They admitted that I might go as far as that; their speech betraying their native town at every rich word.

'Huddersfield, of course?' I said, to make them out with it.

'Bolton,' said one at last. Being in uniform the pitman could not destroy the impertinent civilian.

'Ah, Bolton!' I returned. '*All* cotton, aren't you?'

'Some coal,' he answered gravely. There is notorious rivalry 'twixt coal and cotton in Bolton, but I wanted to see him practise the self-control that the Army is always teaching.

As I have said, he and his companion were most polite, but the total of their information, boiled and peeled, was that they had just come from Bolton way; might at any moment be sent

somewhere else, and they liked Gloucestershire in the south. A spy could not have learned much less.

The battalion halted, and moved off by companies for further evolutions. One could see they were more than used to drill and arms; a hardened, thick-necked, thin-flanked, deep-chested lot, dealt with quite faithfully by their sergeants, and altogether abreast of their work. Why, then, this reticence? What had they to be ashamed of, these big Bolton folk without an address? Where was their orderly-room?

There were many orderly-rooms in the little old town, most of them in bye-lanes less than one car wide. I found what I wanted, and—this was north-country all over—a private who volunteered to steer me to headquarters through the tricky southern streets. He was communicative, and told me a good deal about typhoid-inoculation and musketry practice, which accounted for only six companies being on parade. But surely they could not have been ashamed of *that*.

GUARDING A RAILWAY

I unearthed their skeleton at last in a peaceful, gracious five-hundred-year-old house that looked on to lawns and cut hedges bounded by age-old red brick walls—such a perfumed and dreaming

place as one would choose for the setting of some even-pulsed English love-tale of the days before the war.

Officers were billeted in the low-ceiled, shiny-floored rooms full of books and flowers.

'And now,' I asked, when I had told the tale of the uncommunicative cyclist, 'what *is* the matter with your battalion?'

They laughed cruelly at me. 'Matter!' said they. 'We're just off three months of guarding railways. After *that* a man wouldn't trust his own mother. You don't mean to say our cyclists let you know where we've come from last?'

'No, they didn't,' I replied. 'That was what worried me. I assumed you'd all committed murders, and had been sent here to live it down.'

Then they told me what guarding a line really means. How men wake and walk, with only express troop-trains to keep them company, all the night long on windy embankments or under still more windy bridges; how they sleep behind three sleepers up-ended or a bit of tin, or, if they are lucky, in a platelayer's hut; how their food comes to them slopping across the square-headed ties that lie in wait to twist a man's ankle after dark; how they stand in blown coal-dust of goods-yards trying to watch five lines of trucks at once; how fools of all classes pester the lonely pickets, whose orders are to hold up motors for inquiry, and then write

silly letters to the War Office about it. How nothing ever happens through the long weeks but infallibly would if the patrols were taken off. And they had one refreshing story of a workman who at six in the morning, which is no auspicious hour to jest with Lancashire, took a short cut to his work by ducking under some goods-wagons, and when challenged by the sentry replied, posturing on all fours, 'Boo, I'm a German!' Whereat the upright sentry fired, unfortunately missed him, and then gave him the butt across his ass's head, so that his humour, and very nearly his life, terminated.

After which the sentry was seldom seen to smile, but frequently heard to murmur, 'Ah should hev slipped t' baggonet into him.'

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

'So you see,' said the officers in conclusion, 'you mustn't be surprised that our men wouldn't tell you much.'

'I begin to see,' I said. 'How many of you are coal and how many cotton?'

'Two-thirds coal and one-third cotton, roughly. It keeps the men deadly keen. An operative isn't going to give up while a pitman goes on; and very much *vice versâ*.'

'That's class-prejudice,' said I.

'It's most useful,' said they. The officers them-

selves seemed to be interested in coal or cotton, and had known their men intimately on the civil side. If your orderly-room sergeant, or your quartermaster has been your trusted head clerk or foreman for ten or twelve years, and if eight out of a dozen sergeants have controlled pitmen and machinists, above and below ground, and eighty per cent of these pitmen and machinists are privates in the companies, your regiment works with something of the precision of a big business.

It was all new talk to me, for I had not yet met a Northern Territorial battalion with the strong pride of its strong town behind it. Where were they when the war came? How had they equipped themselves? I wanted to hear the tale. It was worth listening to as told with North-Country joy of life and the doing of things in that soft down-country house of the untroubled centuries. Like every one else, they were expecting anything but war. 'Hadn't even begun their annual camp. Then the thing came, and Bolton rose as one man and woman to fit out its battalion. There was a lady who wanted a fairly large sum of money for the men's extra footgear. She set aside a morning to collect it, and inside the hour came home with nearly twice her needs, and spent the rest of the time trying to make people take back fivers, at least, out of tenners. And the big hauling firms flung horses and transport at them and at the Govern-

ment, often refusing any price, or, when it was paid, turning it into the war funds. What the battalion wanted it had but to ask for. Once it was short of, say, towels. An officer approached the head of a big firm, with no particular idea he would get more than a few dozen from that quarter.

'And how many towels d'you want?' said the head of the firm. The officer suggested a globular thousand.

'I think you'll do better with twelve hundred,' was the curt answer. 'They're ready out yonder. Get 'em,'

And in this style Bolton turned out her battalion. Then the authorities took it and strung it by threes and fives along several score miles of railway track: and it had only just been reassembled, and it had been inoculated for typhoid. Consequently, they said (but all officers are like mothers and motor-car owners), it wasn't up to what it would be in a little time. In spite of the cyclist, I had had a good look at the deep-chested battalion in the park, and after getting their musketry figures,[1] it seemed to me that very soon it might be worth looking at by more prejudiced persons than myself.

[1] Thanks to the miniature rifle clubs fostered by Lord Roberts a certain number of recruits in all the armies come to their regiments with a certain knowledge of sighting, rifle-handling, and the general details of good shooting, especially at snap and disappearing work.

The next day I read that this battalion's regular battalion in the field had distinguished itself by a piece of work which, in other wars, would have been judged heroic. Bolton will read it, not without remarks, and other towns who love Bolton, more or less, will say that if all the truth could come out their regiments had done as well. Anyway, the result will be more men—pitmen, mill-hands, clerks, checkers, weighers, winders, and hundreds of those sleek, well-groomed business-chaps whom one used to meet in the big Midland hotels, protesting that war was out of date. These latter develop surprisingly in the camp atmosphere. I recall one raging in his army shirt-sleeves at a comrade who had derided his principles. 'I *am* a blanky pacificist,' he hissed, 'and I'm proud of it, and—and I'm going to make *you* one before I've finished with you!'

THE SECRET OF THE SERVICES

Pride of city, calling, class, and creed imposes standards and obligations which hold men above themselves at a pinch, and steady them through long strain. One meets it in the New Army at every turn, from the picked Territorials who slipped across Channel last night to the six-week-old Service battalion maturing itself in mud. It is

balanced by the ineradicable English instinct to understate, detract, and decry—to mask the thing done by loudly drawing attention to the things undone. The more one sees of the camps the more one is filled with facts and figures of joyous significance, which will become clearer as the days lengthen; and the less one hears of the endurance, decency, self-sacrifice, and utter devotion which have made, and are hourly making, this wonderful new world. The camps take this for granted—else why should any man be there at all? He might have gone on with his business, or—watched 'soccer.' But having chosen to do his bit, he does it, and talks as much about his motives as he would of his religion or his love-affairs. He is eloquent over the shortcomings of the authorities, more pessimistic as to the future of his next neighbour battalion than would be safe to print, and lyric on his personal needs—baths and drying-rooms for choice. But when the grousing gets beyond a certain point—say at three a.m., in steady wet, with the tent-pegs drawing like false teeth—the nephew of the insurance-agent asks the cousin of the baronet to inquire of the son of the fried-fish vendor what the stevedore's brother and the tutor of the public school joined the Army *for*. Then they sing 'Somewhere the Sun is Shining' till the Sergeant Ironmonger's assistant cautions them to drown in silence or the Lieutenant

Telephone-appliances-manufacturer will speak to them in the morning.

The New armies have not yet evolved their typical private, n.-c.-o., and officer, though one can see them shaping. They are humorous because, for all our long faces, we are the only genuinely humorous race on earth; but they all know for true that there are no excuses in the Service. 'If there *were*,' said a three-month-old under-gardener-private to me, 'what 'ud become of Discipline?'

They are already setting standards for the coming millions, and have sown little sprouts of regimental tradition which may grow into age-old trees. In one corps, for example, though no dubbin is issued a man loses his name for parading with dirty boots. He looks down scornfully on the next battalion where they are not expected to achieve the impossible. In another—an ex-Guards sergeant brought 'em up by hand—the drill is rather high-class. In a third they fuss about records for route-marching, and men who fall out have to explain themselves to their sweating companions. This is entirely right. They are all now in the Year One, and the meanest of them may be an ancestor of whom regimental posterity will say: 'There were giants in those days!'

THE REAL QUESTION

This much we can realise, even though we are so close to it. The old safe instinct saves us from triumph and exultation. But what will be the position in years to come of the young man who has deliberately elected to outcaste himself from this all-embracing brotherhood? What of his family, and, above all, what of his descendants, when the books have been closed and the last balance struck of sacrifice and sorrow in every hamlet, village, parish, suburb, city, shire, district, province, and Dominion throughout the Empire?

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